

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-03 USIA-15 PRS-01

L-03 DRC-01 /073 W

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R 052345Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5006

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, CS

SUBJECT: THREATENED ELECTRICAL WORKERS STRIKE

REF: SAN JOSE 3000, 3021, 3039, AND 3102

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: HAVING FAILED TO MAKE GOOD ON THEIR THREATENED STRIKE FOR OVER A WEEK, IT APPEARS THAT THE TWO ICE ELECTRICAL WORKERS UNIONS ARE LOSING STEAM, AND THEIR LEADERS WOULD WELCOME "POLITICAL INTERVENTION" TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE ARISING FROM ICE'S DISMISSAL OF EIGHT UNION ACTIVISTS. THUS, REPORTED ATTEMPTS BY DANIEL ODUBER TO BRING TOGETHER FOR TALKS THE MINISTERS OF LABOR AND PUBLIC WORKS, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE PUBLICLY TAKEN OPPOSITE SIDES IN THE DISPUTE, OFFER SOME FAINT HOPE THAT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT MAY YET BE FOUND. BARRING A SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT, HOWEVER, THE UNIONS STILL SEEM DETERMINED TO PRESS AHEAD WITH A WORK STOPPAGE AGAINST ICE TO DEFEND WHAT THEY FEEL IS THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE WORKERS. END SUMMARY.

2. SITET AND ASDEICE, THE TWO ELECTRICAL WORKERS UNIONS, HAVE STILL ISSUED NO STRIKE CALL AGAINST ICE, THE COSTA RICAN ELECTRICITY INSTITUTE, BUT THE DISPUTE OVER ICE'S DISMISSAL OF EIGHT UNION ACTIVISTS IN THE JUNE

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SITET STRIKE REMAINS UNSOLVED. THE EMBASSY HAS

JUST LEARNED THAT PLN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DANIEL ODUBER IS ATTEMPTING TO BRING TOGETHER LABOR MINISTER FRANCISCO MORALES, WHO HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE UNION POSITION, AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER RODOLFO SILVA, A MEMBER OF THE HARDLINE ANTI-UNION ICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TO HELP WORK OUT SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE DISPUTE. THAT SITET LEADERSHIP AND MOST OF THE UNION'S RANK AND FILE ARE MEMBERS OF PLN UNDOUBTEDLY SPURRED ODUBER'S INITIATIVE IN THIS ELECTION YEAR. THE PTTI REPRESENTATIVE HERE TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT THE UNIONS WOULD AWAIT THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO MINISTERS, IF IT COMES OFF, BEFORE MAKING A FINAL STRIKE DECISION. SEPTEMBER 5 PRESS REPORT STATES THAT PRESIDENT FIGUERES MAY BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED NOW THAT THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT'S VISIT IS OVER.

3. MEANWHILE, BOTH ICE AND THE UNIONS ARE CONTINUING THEIR NATIONWIDE EFFORTS TO RALLY SUPPORT TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAUSES. ICE HAS NOW GARNERED ENDORSEMENTS FOR ITS STAND FROM AN UMBRELLA GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS, AND VARIOUS MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, AS WELL AS SEVERAL AUTONOMOUS STATE INSTITUTES, MOST NOTABLY THE SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE, WHICH WAS INVOLVED IN A LONG LABOR CONFLICT IN JUNE 1972 WITH ANOTHER DEMOCRATIC UNION, UNDECA. ICE HAS ALSO INVESTED HEAVILY IN NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS TO DEFEND ITS STAND. FOR ITS PART, THE SITET/ASDEICE POSITION HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY THE DEMOCRATIC WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CCTDWL AND THE ELECTRICAL, COMMUNICATIONS AND POSTAL WORKERS FEDERATION (FENECEP), BOTH OF WHICH SITET IS AFFILIATED, AS WELL AS THE INDEPENDENT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (A EP).

4. COMMENT: DESPITE THEIR BRAVE FRONT, IT APPEARS THAT SITET AND ASDEICE HAVE LOST LAST WEEK'S MOMENTUM BY CONTINUALLY POSTPONING THEIR STRIKE CALL. INDEED, THEIR FAILURE TO LAUNCH THE STRIKE MAY INDICATE THAT THE TWO UNIONS NOW QUESTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR CHANCES FOR SUCCESS. AT THIS POINT, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FENECEP, THOSE OUTSIDE UNIONS WHO HAVE ENDORSED THE SITET/ASDEICE STAND WILL NOT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, BE WILLING TO SUPPORT THE EMBATTLED ICE UNIONS WITH SYMPATHY STRIKES. THUS IT WOULD APPEAR THAT BOTH UNIONS WOULD NOW WELCOME A POLITICAL SOLUTION THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, DANIEL ODUBER,

OR PRESIDENT FIGUERES TO GET THEM OFF THE HOOK.  
NONETHELESS, WE DO NOT RULE OUT A POSSIBLY SUICIDAL  
STRIKE, IF THE UNIONS ARE NOT OFFERED A GRACEFUL WAY  
OUT OF THE DISPUTE THAT INCLUDES REINSTATEMENT OF THE  
EIGHT DISMISSED SITET ACTIVISTS. SO STRONG IS THE  
CONVICTION OF THE UNION LEADERS THAT THEIR DEFENSE OF  
THE EIGHT IS IN FACT A DEFENSE OF THE RIGHT OF WORKERS TO  
ORGANIZE THAT THEY MAY DECIDE TO MARTYR THEIR  
ORGANIZATIONS FOR THIS PRINCIPLE.  
VAKY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** LABOR STRIKES, LABOR ARBITRATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 05 SEP 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973SANJO03157  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** SAN JOSE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t19730953/aaaabngm.tel  
**Line Count:** 125  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** SAN JOSE 3000, 3021, 3039, AND 3102  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 JAN 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <23-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2002 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THREATENED ELECTRICAL WORKERS STRIKE  
**TAGS:** ELAB, CS, ICE ELECTRICAL WORKERS UNION  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005